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BOOK REVIEWS.

PROFESSOR WILLIAM JAMES'S PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

THE VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE. A Story in Human Nature. The Gifford Lectures, delivered in Edinburgh, 1901-1902. By William James, LL. D. New York and London: Longmans, Green & Co. Pp. xii, 534.

The Psychology of Religion receives a notable addition in this volume for which we have to thank Professor William James's appointment to the Gifford Lectureship in Edinburgh for the session of 1901-02. It was a happy thought on the part of the lecturer to celebrate the occasion by bringing together records and reflections upon various forms of religious experience. It was especially happy to decide to set aside the dull traditions of theological lecture rooms and to deal directly with the living facts as we find them in the "pattern-setters," the men and women in whom religion has been no flaccid habit of response to conventional symbols, but an acute fever of all-absorbing emotion. We are I suppose bound to take Professor James at his word when he disowns for himself the "leaky" form of consciousness which in his view is indicated by the more startling phenomena of religious experience. In other respects, by sympathy, erudition, psychological address and analytical insight it may safely be said that no living writer was better qualified for such a task. That he has performed it in a masterly way need hardly be said. Unfortunately he found himself called upon by his role of lecturer in Natural Theology to add to his programme a philosophical estimate of the value of the phenomena as proofs of our spiritual affinities and of a Divine order in the world and here we cannot think that he has been equally successful.

Accepting the logical distinction between essential and appreciative or spiritual judgments Professor James divides his subject into two branches. 1. The facts of religious experience. 2. The question of their philosophical significance. The first of these occupies the larger portion of the volume before us.

After a skilfully conveyed warning against the fallacy of taking

the origins and physiological accompaniments of our higher experiences as the measure of their value and an equally skilful justification of his preference for the more extravagant and even morbid examples, Professor James proceeds to the definition or "Circumscription" of religion as the total reaction of the individual man—his feelings, acts and experiences—in the presence of that which is primary and enveloping. Premising that this reaction must be serious and purgatorial as contrasted with the raillery of a Voltaire or the railing of a Carlyle, he shows that it may be of all degrees of intensity from the graceful or the condescending acquiescence of a Locker-Sampson or Margaret Fuller to the enthusiasm of the Christian or the Stoic, admirably distinguishing the Christian from the Pagan variety as agreement *with* rather than *to* the scheme of the universe. This gives us the function and with it the only definition of religion that is possible. Religion is that which puts an end to the attitude of struggle and dissent, adds a new dimension to life and spreads out a new reach of freedom making "easy and felicitous what in any case is necessary."

Next follows a chapter which seems to belong of right rather to the second part of the subject. It aims at showing that the sense of the reality of the object of the deeper religious emotions bears no proportion to the extent to which it can be rationalized. Theology has the *prestige* because it has the loquacity; but the unreasoned and immediate assurance is the deep thing in us, the reasoned argument that moves on the loquacious level being mere surface play. The statement introduces us to what we feel in the second part of the book to be a fundamental ambiguity in the writer's doctrine. Does he mean that the unseen and transcendent reality which is the object of religious feeling is in the last resort without rational justification? Or does he mean merely that feeling and religious emotion are one thing, the philosophy of religion another? Leaving this meantime we may follow a little further the attractive path of his religious psychology.

The succeeding chapters deal with "The Religion of Healthy-mindedness," "The Sick Soul," "The Divided Self." In the first of these the writer's sympathetic treatment of the ideas underlying the new Mind-cure movement in America and his suggestion that it may possess a key of its own to the treasure-house of the world as useful as that of physical science itself are especially interesting to readers in England, where the movement is as yet in its infancy. Contrasted with the religion of healthy-mindedness that

of soul-sickness stands for the reality of pain and evil. It comes as a gospel of deliverance to the "twice-born" and is thus of a deeper and more universal application. The treatment of the divided self leads up to an admirable account of "Conversion," the phenomena of which, the "uprushes and automatisms" that made our flesh creep in the religious biographies of our childhood, are explained, as we might expect, in terms of the subconscious. Such explanation, it need not be said, does not exclude in Professor James's view the idea of penetration of a higher power. On the contrary suggestibility and marginal leakage may be the conditions of the operation of higher spiritual agencies.

We thus come to the centre of the book in the five chapters on Saintliness. It is impossible in a review like this to do justice to the splendid treatment of this section. I shall not attempt it, but merely say that it seems to me a model of all that a psychological discussion engaged, as Aristotle would say, with the highest object should be: full, sympathetic, sane, convincing, abounding in practical suggestiveness.

Hardly less completely satisfying are the following chapters upon "Mysticism," which conclude the first portion of the discussion.

Hitherto the author has been dealing in existential judgments. From these he turns to the question of value, distinguishing the subjective from the objective, the utility of religious emotion to the individual from the logical value of the intellectual content. The discussion of the former he has been at no great pains to keep separate from the psychological account and the main results have been already anticipated in the admirable "Critique of Pure Saintliness," which occupies chapters XIV and XV. He here treats of the fruits of Saintliness under the four heads of Devoutness, Purity, Charity and Asceticism. In respect to the first two Saintliness is shown to have had its vagaries in the fanaticism of the Crusaders and the imbecility of a Blessed Margaret Alacoque or a St. Theresa. Similarly, Purity and Simplicity have had their extravagancies in their "militant" form in ecclesiastical persecutions, in their "fugient" form in the loathsome chastity of saints of the type of Saint Louis of Gonzaga. But *Charity* covers a multitude of sins, even the sins of excessive virtue, and Professor James sees in the non-resistant, indiscriminating and all-conquering charity of the Saints a much needed counteractive to the preva-

lent mood. So taken, the Saints are the great torch-bearers, the tip of the wedge, the cleavers of the darkness. "Like the single drops which sparkle in the sun as they are flung far ahead of the advancing edge of a wave-crest or of flood they show the way and are the forerunners. The world is not yet with them so they often seem in the midst of the world's affairs to be preposterous. Yet they are impregnators of the world, vivifiers and animators of potentialities of goodness which but for them would lie dormant. It is not possible to be quite as mean as we naturally are when they have passed before us. One fire kindles another; and without that over-trust in human worth which they show the rest of us would lie in spiritual stagnacy." The drift of Professor James's views on Asceticism may be gathered from his suggestive remark that the problem of modern ethics in this regard is to discover the moral equivalent of War.

To most men the practical value of their religion is the evidence of its objective truth, or rather its utility and its truth are one and the same. As Professor Leuba has put it, "God is not known, He is not understood; He is used. If He proves Himself useful, the religious consciousness asks for no more than that." But the philosopher (and all men are philosophers at times) must go beyond subjective utility and so we come in the end to the question of the intellectual justification of religious beliefs. This last part of his subject Professor James deals with specifically in two of the later lectures followed by a "Postscript." His readers will welcome the prospect he holds out of expanding on a subsequent occasion the statement therein contained into a more systematic treatment of the Philosophy of Religion. Meanwhile he gives us an instalment in a criticism of the answers of Dogmatic Theology and "Modern Idealism," followed by a statement of the lines along which he believes that light is to be sought.

Dogmatic theology, he tells us, fails to prove either the being or the attributes of God, the chief argument on which it relies, viz., the argument from design having to be transformed beyond recognition in the presence of Darwinism on the one hand and the now generally accepted provisional character of our classifications and explanations on the other.

Equally unsatisfactory is the contention of idealist philosophy working from the logical implications of our moral and theoretic judgments and seeking to establish upon this basis the existence of a Universal Consciousness. With this programme Professor

James holds it has made no progress. In spite of the labors of a century it has ended in simply "reaffirming the individual's experiences in a more generalized vocabulary" (p. 453). In proof of its bankruptcy we have the fact that it has been rejected by the majority of the scholars of to-day. But even though its reasonings were more satisfactory than they are religion would have nothing to hope for from such a conceptual treatment. "Conceptual processes can clear facts, define them, interpret them; but they do not produce them nor can they reproduce their individuality." In place of these pretentious combinations what is wanted is a "science of religion" which shall devote itself to collating the concrete facts of various forms of religious consciousness and thence proceeding to the elimination of all that is merely local and accidental may thereafter attempt to arrive at "a residuum of conceptions" which may be generally accepted as scientifically established. It is admitted (p. 490) that past attempts in this way to reach the germ of religious consciousness have not been conspicuously successful in fortifying fundamental religious beliefs, showing on the contrary a marked tendency to undermine them. But this is partly because investigators have started with a prejudice in favor of a mechanical interpretation of phenomena leading them to reject the *primaeval* religious attitude as "animistic," partly because they have systematically neglected the evidence which psychical research has brought in favor of an order of facts which have an important bearing on religious beliefs. The ultimate fact, the bedrock of religion is belief in the saving efficacy of a higher power, a "something more of the same quality with ourselves which is operative in the universe outside of us and which we can keep in working touch with." The guarantee of the reality of such a something more we have in the fact established or on the way to be established that "the conscious person is conscious with a wider self through which its saving experiences come."

Professor James claims for his book that it is a crumb-like contribution to "the psychological individual types of character." It is impossible to exaggerate the brilliance of his performance in this respect. He has given us not only crumbs but a substantial loaf. But many who, like the present writer, are most fully conscious of its striking merits as a contribution to psychology will find themselves compelled to admit its hardly less striking defects as a contribution to philosophy. Leaving Dogmatic Theology to defend

itself we may divide the question raised by the preceding argument into two: 1. What does Idealist Philosophy in its widest sense claim to do in the field of religion and what has it achieved? 2. On the assumption that it has failed is the science of religion as conceived by Professor James able to supply its supposed deficiencies?

1. In reference to the first we may set aside at once Professor James's interpretation of the idealistic philosophy of religion as an attempt "to construct religious objects out of the resources of logical reason or of logical reason drawing rigorous inferences from non-subjective facts." It may safely be said that no representative writer, certainly not any of those that are here quoted has ever put forward so preposterous a claim. After all that has been said by such writers as Wallace and Mr. Bradley as to the relation of philosophy to concrete experience it is somewhat surprising to meet this form of misunderstanding in Professor James's pages. We need not, however, dwell upon it as he elsewhere shows that he is in complete harmony with the latter writer in interpreting philosophy in a truer sense as "the endeavour to find arguments for our convictions, for indeed it has to find them." He further shows himself alive to the general drift of the argument on which idealist philosophy mainly relies when he finds it in the implications of our existential judgments (p. 449). Yet it is impossible to avoid the suspicion that he nevertheless fails to appreciate or even to understand wherein specifically the idealist contention as to the implications of experience consists. Only on such a supposition can we explain how so circumspect a writer can airily set aside the work of a whole generation of the most strenuous philosophical scholars in England and America with the above quoted remark that they simply reaffirm individual experience in a more generalized vocabulary, and that it is unnecessary to prove the point technically seeing that their work has failed to commend itself to a majority of scholars in Germany.

In a writer who lays so much stress on the Will to believe and is so resolute in insisting on the pragmatic sanction of our beliefs, the reader will be inclined to suspect some practical ground for so apparently unreasoned an antipathy to recent philosophy. Perhaps he will find it in the remarkable passage in which Professor James accuses "the refined supernaturalism to which most philosophers at the present day belong" of excluding ideal influences from "the forces that casually determine the real world's details" and thus rendering prayer and religious aspiration

comparatively nugatory (p. 521). But such a line of criticism cannot be said to affect idealism. Its withers are unwrung; for if it refuses to admit the interpolation of the ideal "piecemeal between distinct portions of nature" this is because of its contention that nature is already suffused with the ideal and that man's mission alike in science, in art and in conduct is to realize this ideality by turning the world if not upside down at least inside out. Whether and in what way, he may be furthered in his task by the communion of saints with one another or with the animating spirit of the whole is a matter for experience to decide. The Higher Pantheism declares its belief on this head with no uncertain voice in the lines:

"Speak to him then, for he hears, and spirit with spirit can meet;
Closer is he than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."

and idealists in general have been content with this mode of formulating it.*

It is the more remarkable that Professor James should scout the aid of conceptual philosophy, seeing that in at least one important passage he has shown to what effective use he can put its leading principle. In criticising the "survival theory" of the religious consciousness he meets the claim of "sectarian scientists" to explain all phenomena in terms of mechanism, by pointing out in a series of admirable paragraphs the abstract character of the "object" of the physical sciences as compared with the fullness of the facts of concrete personal experience. And lest it be supposed that this criticism is an appeal from all thought and concept to the momentary thrill of feeling, he adds that by fact he means a "full fact, a conscious field *plus* its object as felt or thought, *plus* an attitude towards the object, *plus* the sense of a self to whom the attitude belongs." What is this but an appeal from the part to the whole, from the abstract and incomplete to the relatively complete and self-contained which is the pivot of the whole Idealist contention? If taken seriously and consistently applied there is no halting place between this admission and the idealist position. It is interesting to notice in this connection the resemblance between Professor James's argument and the central contention of Professor Royce's recently published Volumes upon the World and the Individual. The point is somewhat hastily stated by Professor James and thus has an air of dogmatism which it loses in Professor Royce's fuller statement. But it is at bottom the same

*See Green's Works, III., p. 273.

contention and contains in germ precisely such a philosophy of religion as the previous lecture has endeavored to discredit. It will be interesting to see how Professor James, in the promised work to which we all look forward, will reconcile acceptance of Professor Royce's major premise with the rejection of his conclusions.

2. Experience rests on, and implies the consciousness of the larger life which is the object of ethical and religious faith. This, in a word, is the contention of Idealism. The implications of concrete experience has been the "new way of ideas" since Kant. This principle, we have seen, Professor James makes the head of the corner in constructing an argument against his enemies on the side of science. Yet he rejects it in the final appeal and has recourse instead to an attempt in the first place to reach the common residuum, the prairie value so to speak of the religious consciousness, and in the second place to discover what science itself has to say as to the grounds for religious beliefs. The former procedure bears, it must be confessed, a suspicious resemblance to the old conceptualist attempt to reach the universal by the omission of all that is characteristic of the individual—now little better than a philosophical curiosity. If this is what Professor James means he has more than idealist philosophy to reckon with, *inter alia* the doctrine of universals in the "Principles of Psychology" as I at least understand it. But we are prepared to hear on a fuller statement of his position that he is alive to the pitfalls of the "abstract universal." How he proposes to avoid them without having recourse to a "philosophy" as opposed to a "science of religion" he has yet to explain.

The second part of the above programme as at present explained to us leaves an equally chilling impression. There are two fundamental reasons why the reader of this book who comes to the question fortified with Professor James's own teaching should protest against the attempt to rest his religious faith on the results of psychical research:—

(a.) It does not give him what he seeks. We require for religion, as Professor James himself expresses it, an extension of our own consciousness in "something of the same quality," individual concrete, self-contained. Religion is the aspiration of the soul towards a larger life of the same quality as the present only more fully satisfying—fuller knowledge, more perfect volition, intenser, more extended, more reciprocated feeling, in a word a richer and more varied and, at the same time, a more unified form of con-

scious experience. Instead of offering us a form of Being possessed itself of these attributes and ready to impart them to those whose life is hid within it the argument refers us to evidence for the existence of a form of consciousness which, as compared with our own, is in all accounts represented as relatively undifferentiated, involuntary and irresponsible. With the Subliminal we have of course no quarrel. We accept it as Margaret Fuller accepted the Universe. But we refuse on the evidence before us to accept it as a substitute for the Sublime. And our reason is that it seems to lack precisely the element which the Sublime on Professor James's own teaching must be conceived of possessing—the quality of primariness and embraciveness. It gives us so far as the evidence seems to go rather consciousness in the making, the raw material, rather than the completion of conscious experience. Professor James claims that this is the region in which "our ideal impulses originate," but the phrase is in the last degree ambiguous and may mean no more than that our ideals soak into us unconsciously in our ordinary contact with the world where also they again manifest themselves in the fulness of time. This with qualifications derived from the inner character of the soul itself we should admit. On the other hand we see no reason to deny the continuity of this subliminal form of consciousness beyond the individual perhaps throughout the universe. Our ordinary fully developed consciousness carries us beyond the merely individual uniting us with other individuals and in the judgment of most idealists with a wider form of experience in which the society of individuals finds its completion, and analogy seems to point to a similar continuity in the embryo. What we contend is that twilight, semi-conscious experience of the kind revealed by psychical research, seems to bear no real relation to the object of religious adoration; nor is it easy to see what light can be thrown upon the reality of the latter by the proof that human consciousness seems to spring from and contains to the end within itself a matrix of the former. "It weakens religion to hear it argued on such a basis."

Professor James, indeed, appeals to our sympathy in his humorous comparison of himself to a man who throws himself into any opening that offers into the infinite, when all the doors about him are being one by one closed in his face. But it is still a question whither the door he has his foot against really leads; some contend it is only to the cellars. Perhaps there is no need for such a

door at all, the enclosure being only apparent and the room itself the portal of the infinite.

(b.) So far from strengthening his position against the mechanical philosophers (his only real enemies) Professor James by appealing to science against philosophy exposes his case anew to their attack. What so easy as to reply that the subconscious is one of the weapons in their own armory? It offers a simple explanation of much that has hitherto seemed inexplicable in normal consciousness (*e. g.*, the supposed freedom of the will) and itself courts a mechanical explanation. In reply to such an objection Professor James would appeal presumably to his former distinction between the abstract and the concrete, thereby recalling the assistance of philosophy. But by his own act he has removed the argument from the region of "full" concrete experience; and the distinction having lost its edge might refuse to work.

These doubts as to the tenableness of his position can hardly but be confirmed by the odd sense of incompleteness and even incoherence with which the student reads Professor James's own confession of faith in the closing lecture and the Postscript. In the former passage, after indicating his belief that investigations into the subliminal put us in touch with deeper strata of consciousness, he proceeds to interpret the subliminal, first as "a larger power which is friendly to man and his ideals," next as God, and finally as "the guarantee of an ideal order that shall be permanently preserved" if not in this perishing world then elsewhere in his universe. Inquiring for the justification of these over-beliefs we are frankly referred not to the warrant of facts but to our subjective needs. God, we are told, "requires to enter into wider cosmic relations in order to justify the subject's absolute confidence and peace." We are familiar with this appeal to the working power of belief as the test of its validity in the writings of a recent school. Though ambiguously expressed in the usual form of statement we are willing to accept it on one condition, *viz.*, that we interpret the "work" it has to do in the widest sense. The belief that "works" is true but it must work all round. It must satisfy our needs but it must satisfy them all, the needs of the reason not less than those of the will and emotions (if indeed they are different) our demand for harmony in our intellectual as well as for harmony in our moral world. In any interpretation of "pragmatism" that falls short of this we are on dangerous ground. Do the above over-beliefs meet this test and if not what becomes of them? These surely are

vital questions that are not answered merely by showing that other people's philosophy has failed to throw light upon them.

To tell the truth, in the present exposition Professor James seems to lay little stress upon the above statement of the needs that these over-beliefs are meant to satisfy. On finding himself removed from the vigilant eyes of an exacting Presbyterian audience he seems to have discovered that far less was really forthcoming than was needed to satisfy them. Hence the method he adopts in his interesting Postscript of trying to square the "needs and experiences of religion" with the evidences of fact. All that we really require, we are here told, is that the "power should be other and larger than our conscious selves." "Anything larger will do so long as it be large enough to trust for the next step." Surely this depends on the length of the step. "It need not be infinite," he continues, "it need not be solitary. A final philosophy may have to consider the pluralistic hypothesis much more seriously than it has hitherto done." This is cutting our coat according to our cloth with a vengeance, as most readers will probably think, even those who ere they have reached the Postscript have reduced their expectations to the necessary dimensions and are prepared to accept the off chance of a God. For ourselves we are willing to consider anything, but before we reduce our intellectual demands upon the universe to the level that is here required, we may be excused if we demand to be assured by more convincing methods than Professor James has employed that there is no other and better way of approaching the question of the foundations of belief.

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PERSONAL IDEALISM. Philosophical Essays by Eight Members of the University of Oxford. Edited by Henry Sturt. London: Macmillan & Co. Pp. x., 393.

This volume opens with an essay by Dr. Stout on "Error," of which it is impossible to speak too highly, and which forms a most important addition to Epistemology. Speaking of the definition of error as the agreement of thought with reality, Dr. Stout points out that it "omits to state that reality with which thought is to agree or disagree must itself be thought of, and that the thinker must intend to think of it as it is.